

Definitive Guide to Thanksgiving Crafts



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Learn How to Decorate Your Home For A Festive Fall Season

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Introduction

We have all been taught the story of the first Thanksgiving. The Pilgrims came over on the Mayflower to find freedom from religious persecution. They were met by the Indians (Native Americans) who were less than thrilled to see the newcomers invading their land. After much negotiation and some give and take, they finally came to an agreement to share the land.

After they came to an understanding, they wanted to commemorate the occasion by thanking God for their good fortune, so they decided to have a feast with foods that both the Indians and the Pilgrims considered native to their culture. There was corn, turkey, chicken, and a variety of vegetables.

Well, at least that is the story we all know. Of course, historians say that the real first Thanksgiving was much different than what we have been taught. However, despite this, the Thanksgiving holiday has been celebrated for years as a holiday where we take the time to remember our blessings, gather with family, and eat – a lot!

The true story of Thanksgiving isn't as important as why we celebrate this holiday. Over the years, it has become a special time of the year for many cultures. We usually decorate our homes for the holiday, and Thanksgiving is no different a time.

That is why Thanksgiving crafts are very popular not only in our schools, but for many creative people who like to make hand made decorations for the home.

Children especially love to make Thanksgiving crafts because it gives them the chance to practice new skills and end up with a fun decoration they can be proud of making themselves. Most children's Thanksgiving crafts will require some

adult supervision, although there are crafts that can be made with a minimum of adult involvement.

In fact, there are lots of Thanksgiving crafts that can be created by children of almost any age. As long as they can use a pair of scissors, use a glue stick or a bottle of glue, and wield a paintbrush, they can create fun Thanksgiving crafts that can make your home look festive for the occasion.

Because there are so many ways you can involve children in Thanksgiving decorating, this book is intended to give you a plethora of ideas that can help you get started. You can, of course, use your imagination, but why do that when we can get you well on your way towards making fun and cute Thanksgiving decorations that are easy to make and that will give you the opportunity to spend some quality time with your child.

Let's start with a brief history of Thanksgiving to give you an idea of how best to commemorate the holiday. We all know the typical symbols of the holiday, but it can be just as important to understand how we came to associate these symbols with Thanksgiving.

Chapter 1 - Why We Celebrate Thanksgiving

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Dates differ somewhat as to exactly when the first Thanksgiving was held. Some say it was in 1620, some say 1621. It is generally, however, stated by historians that the real first Thanksgiving was in 1621 as it was that year that Governor William Bradford proclaimed a day of Thanksgiving.

The first Thanksgiving was celebrated at Plymouth Rock in what we now know as Massachusetts. The feast was thrown to celebrate the harvest that was reaped after a harsh winter. There was a severe drought which brought about many, many prayers for rain. The pilgrims were rewarded with a rain that came down in buckets.

As a result, the harvest was especially good that year yielding many vegetables and providing a great deal of sustenance to get the Pilgrims through the upcoming winter. They felt so blessed that it only seemed natural to celebrate a day of thanks to God.

The colonists celebrated Thanksgiving as a traditional English harvest feast, to which they invited the local Wampanoag Indians. There were 90 Indians and 52 colonists present at the dinner table in Plymouth Rock.

Days of thanksgiving were celebrated throughout the colonies after fall harvests. All thirteen colonies did not, however, celebrate Thanksgiving at the same time until October 1777. George Washington was the first president to declare the holiday, in 1789.

By the mid-1800s, many states observed a Thanksgiving holiday. Meanwhile, the poet and editor Sarah J. Hale had begun lobbying for a national Thanksgiving

holiday. During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln, looking for ways to unite the nation, discussed the subject with Hale. In 1863 he gave his Thanksgiving Proclamation, declaring the last Thursday in November a day of thanksgiving.

In 1939, 1940, and 1941 Franklin D. Roosevelt, seeking to lengthen the Christmas shopping season, proclaimed Thanksgiving the third Thursday in November. Controversy followed, and Congress passed a joint resolution in 1941 decreeing that Thanksgiving should fall on the fourth Thursday of November, where it remains today.

We generally think of certain things when it comes to Thanksgiving. These symbols include turkeys, pumpkin pie, cornucopias or horns of plenty, and dinner with stuffing, cranberry sauce, candied yams, mashed potatoes, and more.

How these symbols got associated with Thanksgiving, however, isn't necessarily clear. Most of what we believe about Thanksgiving today is really based on a magazine editor's idea of Thanksgiving dinner should be.

Today, the staff at Plimouth Plantation which is an area occupying several acres just outside Plymouth, Massachusetts, just outside of Cape Cod is in charge of researching and maintaining the history of the first Thanksgiving.

Of course, it happened long ago, so it is difficult to report on history with much accuracy. The truth is that everything that they know about Thanksgiving comes from two passages in missives written by colonists.

In a letter to a friend, dated December 1621, Edward Winslow wrote:

"Our harvest being gotten in, our Governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a more special manner rejoice together, after we had gathered the fruit of our labors; they four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help

beside, served the Company almost a week, at which time, among other Recreations, we exercised our Arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest King Massasoit, with some 90 men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted and they went out and killed five Deer, which they brought to the Plantation and bestowed on our Governor, and upon the Captain and others."

Twenty years later, William Bradford wrote a book that provides a few more hints as to what might have been on that first Thanksgiving table. But his book was stolen by British looters during the Revolutionary War and therefore didn't have much influence on how Thanksgiving was celebrated until it turned up many years later.

No one is certain whether the Wampanoag and the colonists regularly sat together and shared their food, or if the three-day "thanksgiving" feasts Mr. Winslow recorded for posterity was a one-time event. In the culture of the Wampanoag Indians, who inhabited the area around Cape Cod, "thanksgiving" was an everyday activity.

As a native people, Indians traditionally have thanksgivings as a daily, ongoing thing. Any time anyone went hunting or fishing or picked a plant, they would offer a prayer of acknowledgement. But for the 52 colonists - who had experienced a year of disease, hunger, and diminishing hopes - their bountiful harvest was cause for a special celebration to give thanks.

Neither the English people nor the native people in 1621 knew they were having the first Thanksgiving. No one knew either that the details would interest coming generations.

It wasn't really clear why Chief Massasoit and the 90 other Indian men ended up coming to Plimouth. It is assumed that they were invited, but nowhere in the passage does it say they were. The idea that the Pilgrims and the Indians say

down and lived happily ever after is essentially not true. The relationship between the English and the Wampanoag was very complex.

Since they did not speak the same language, the extent to which the colonists and Indians intermingled remains a mystery. But a few details of that first Thanksgiving are certain.

First, wild turkey was never mentioned in Winslow's account. It is probable that the large amounts of "fowl" brought back by four hunters were seasonal waterfowl such as duck or geese. Although turkey could have been served, it is more likely that duck, geese, or other types of birds were eaten.

If cranberries were served, they would have been used for their tartness or color, not the sweet sauce or relish so common today. In fact, it would be 50 more years before berries were boiled with sugar and used as an accompaniment to meat. Potatoes weren't part of the feast, either. Neither the sweet potato nor the white potato was yet available to colonists.

The presence of pumpkin pie appears to be a myth, too. The group may have eaten pumpkins and other squashes native to New England, but it is unlikely that they had the ingredients for pie crust - butter and wheat flour. Even if they had possessed butter and flour, the colonists hadn't yet built an oven for baking.

While we have been able to work out which modern dishes were not available in 1621, just what was served is a little bit tougher. A couple of guesses can be made from other passages in Winslow's correspondence about the general diet at the time: lobsters, mussels, "sallet herbs," white and red grapes, black and red plums, and flint corn.

There is only one documented harvest feast that occurred between the English and Indian cultures. You do not hear about any other harvests occurring between them. They probably did, on some level, but it is fascinating that it is just one

source, one sentence in one letter that gave information about a feast. There is, of course, much more information not documented which leaves questions about what we don't know about.

Until the early 1800s, Thanksgiving was considered to be a regional holiday celebrated solemnly through fasting and quiet reflection, but the 19th century had its own Martha Stewart, and it didn't take her long to turn New England fasting into national feasting. We already mentioned Sarah Hale was a big proponent in lobbying for a national day of Thanksgiving.

Hale was the editor of the popular magazine Godey's Lady's Book. When she stumbled upon Winslow's passage, she refused to let the historic day fade from the minds - or tables - of Americans. This established trendsetter filled her magazine with recipes and editorials about Thanksgiving and the Thanksgiving feast.

It was also about this time - in 1854, to be exact - that Bradford's history book of Plymouth Plantation resurfaced. The book increased interest in the Pilgrims, and Mrs. Hale and others latched onto the fact he mentioned that the colonists had killed wild turkeys during the autumn.

In her magazine Hale wrote appealing articles about roasted turkeys, savory stuffing, and pumpkin pies - all the foods that today's holiday meals are likely to contain. In the process, she created holiday "traditions" that share few similarities with the original feast in 1621.

In 1858, Hale petitioned the president of the United States to declare Thanksgiving a national holiday. She wrote:

"Let this day, from this time forth, as long as our Banner of Stars floats on the breeze, be the grand Thanksgiving holiday of our nation, when the noise and tumult of worldliness may be exchanged for the length of the laugh of happy

children, the glad greetings of family reunion, and the humble gratitude of the Christian heart."

Five years later, Abraham Lincoln declared the last Thursday of November "as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens." Thus, the national holiday of Thanksgiving was truly born and endures even to this day!

Of course, it is widely accepted that Hale's depiction of the Thanksgiving feast is wrong much more often than its right. When this idea of the first Thanksgiving caught on, it became a big, popular subject for prints and books and paintings, all of which used whatever people could gather about what the environment might have been like in 1621.

With little mention of the native population, the Wampanoag presence was virtually relegated to the background, and the Pilgrim presence promoted to the fore.

It is sometimes forgotten that the Wampanoag was the majority population at the time. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Thanksgiving became a "tool" for Americanization amid the great influx of immigration. It was supposed to bind a diverse population into one unionized group of people.

And so, over the centuries, that first Thanksgiving took on a shape of mythological proportions. But how Americans celebrate today has little to do with the convergence of two different populations across an enormous cultural divide. One man who would like people to know more about the actual Thanksgiving is descended from the Wampanoag Indians who were such an essential part of the first Thanksgiving celebration.

His name is Earl Mills, Sr., and he is a retired high school teacher and athletic director, the author of two books, and the owner of a Plymouth restaurant. He is also known as Flying Eagle and is the chief of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe.

Mills spends a lot of his time thinking about the history of his people along with the confusion about what really happened back in 1621. He notes how much things have changed over the years. "Things have changed so much," he says, choosing his words carefully.

"Even Thanksgiving has changed. Young people today don't remember what it was like 50 or 100 years ago. Then, we picked our own cranberries from our own cranberry bogs, and we caught rabbits and hung them outside our garage doors."

Many Native American children know that as they were growing up, they would celebrate the holiday with their families just as most other Americans did. They would go to a relative's house, eat a turkey dinner, and maybe watch Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on television. Little thought was or even is given to how their ancestors actually observed their day – or days – of thanks.

It is not just the eating, but the gathering together, preparing, and thanking that matters. The role of food is important, but it's gotten to the point where we become gluttons at Thanksgiving.

We could spend a lot more time really thinking about what's going on in our world and giving more thanks and really thinking about what the day means. Many people still don't know or are quick to dismiss the Native American's side of the story.

Still, the Wampanoag now have many more opportunities to contribute to historical accounts of the region, offering insight into the traditions of their people that have been passed down orally through the generations. This alone,

will teach about how the Native Americans viewed and still view how and why to give thanks.

In late 1621, remembering the first Thanksgiving gathering, Edward Winslow expressed a sentiment calling for sharing and giving thanks. He wrote, "Although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."

There are many myths surrounding Thanksgiving. Here are nine things we do know are true about the holiday.

1. The first Thanksgiving was a harvest celebration in 1621 that lasted for three days.
2. The feast most likely occurred between Sept. 21 and Nov. 11.
3. Approximately 90 Wampanoag Indians and 52 colonists - the latter mostly women and children - participated.
4. The Wampanoag, led by Chief Massasoit, contributed at least five deer to the feast.
5. Cranberry sauce, potatoes - white or sweet - and pies were not on the menu.
6. The Pilgrims and Wampanoag communicated through Squanto, a member of the Patuxet tribe, who knew English because he had associated with earlier explorers.
7. Besides meals, the event included recreation and entertainment.
8. There are only two surviving descriptions of the first Thanksgiving. One is in a letter by colonist Edward Winslow. He mentions some of the food and activities. The second description was in a book written by William Bradford 20 years afterward. His account was lost for almost 100 years.
9. Abraham Lincoln named Thanksgiving an annual holiday in 1863.

Even though the true first Thanksgiving is mostly made up of myths and misnomers, it is still a great holiday for us to get together with family and friends, eat a nice meal, and really give thanks for what is important to us.

Often, we go about the business of our daily lives and never realize that we are very lucky for what we have been given from the Big Guy up above no matter what name for him you have!

At Thanksgiving time, this is the perfect time for saying “Thank You” – not only to God, but to each other as well. And we may as well enjoy a nice meal while we’re at it. Don’t you agree? It is a fun and festive time of the year that also helps us usher in another important holiday – Christmas (or Kwanzaa or Hanukah, etc.).

We can still include the traditional images of Thanksgiving when we are decorating our home. Turkeys, Pilgrims, Indians, and pumpkins can certainly all be utilized and crafted in different ways to make them fun and beautiful crafts. Plus, as we said before, you can spend some good quality time with your child.

It is a great time, too, to spark conversation about the first Thanksgiving and what most likely occurred back then when the colonists and the Wampanoag got together to feast. It’s all up to you as to what you tell them. It can be the real version we explained, or you can use the traditional one we have all learned in school.

It doesn’t really matter as long as your child knows why we celebrate Thanksgiving in the first place!

So, that’s enough about the history – myths and all – about Thanksgiving. Now, let’s take a look at the symbols of the season and what they might mean.

Chapter 2 - Thanksgiving Symbolism

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The Turkey



Of course, probably the most prominent symbol we associate with for Thanksgiving is the turkey. That is mostly because many Thanksgiving dinners center on the cooking of a turkey. Its name was derived from the sound “turk turk” which it makes when it is scared.

Turkey is served as a way to remember what the Pilgrims and the Indians ate at their Thanksgiving feast – even if they didn’t eat one!

The Cornucopia



Cornucopia, also known as the 'horn of plenty' is the most common symbol of a harvest festival. A Horn shaped container, it is filled with abundance of harvest.

The traditional cornucopia was a curved goat's horn filled to brim with fruits and grains. According to Greek legend, Amalthea (a goat) broke one of her horns and offered it to Greek God Zeus as a sign of reverence. As a sign of gratitude, Zeus later set the goat's image in the sky also known as constellation Capricorn.

Corn

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One of the most popular symbols of Thanksgiving is the Corn. With its varieties of colors it makes for a very interesting symbol. Some Americans considered blue and white corn to be sacred.

It is believed that Native Americans had been growing corn a long time before the pilgrims arrived in their country. The Americans taught pilgrims how to grow corn and help them survive the bitter winter.

The corn eventually became a part of the first thanksgiving dinner and the tradition continues till date where the corn finds its place on every dinner table the world over and especially during the Thanksgiving dinner. Ornamental Corncobs are a favorite with the masses during the festival.

The dining tables are decorated with harvest wreaths which is also a very popular gift item among Americans. Ornamental popcorns are also widely used. Corn reminds us of the importance and heritage of the famous harvest festival. It also remains America's foundation of 'Modern-Agriculture '.

Pumpkins

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The 'Pumpkin pie' is another modern staple at almost every Thanksgiving table. It is customary. Pumpkin leaves were also used as salads. According to historians, the pumpkin is one of the important symbols of the harvest festival and has been an All American-favorite for over 400 years now.

Cranberries



Cranberry, originally called crane berry, has derived its name from its pink blossoms and drooping head which reminded the pilgrim of a crane. It is a symbol and a modern diet staple of thanksgiving.

Pilgrims soon found out a way to sweeten the bitten cranberries with maple sugar. Ever since, cranberry sauce is a permanent companion of turkey during thanksgiving feast.

Of course, we already know why we associate Pilgrims and Indians with Thanksgiving. No need to explain that one!

Most families have their own Thanksgiving traditions. That could include gathering around the television set for football games, playing cards after dinner, or breaking out your favorite board games. Many of these traditions have become our own symbols of the holiday, and being without them can make Thanksgiving just a little bit odd for many.

Now that you have some of the history and symbolism behind the Thanksgiving holiday, let's move on to what this book is really about – Thanksgiving crafts!

Chapter 3 – Let's Start Crafting!

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Many of the craft ideas we will give you in this book will revolve around crafting for kids rather than adults. We will try to include some “grown-up” crafts, but involving children in Thanksgiving crafting activities can be a great learning experience for both of you and spark some great conversation!

To begin with, you will need a few supplies that are good to have on hand all the time. For each individual project, we’ll tell you what you need, but there are other times of the year when you can make some cute crafts – not just at Thanksgiving.

Having certain supplies on hand makes it easier on you and makes crafting on spur of the moment very possible. Here are some of the staples we have found help to have on hand:

- Construction paper – all colors, all sizes
- Glue sticks and white glue
- Glue gun
- Pipe cleaners (chenille stems)
- Poster or tempera paint
- Crayons, markers, and colored pencils
- Hole punch
- String (yarn is fine)
- Scissors
- Wiggly eyes
- Various craft items like feathers, beads, glitter, etc.
- Poster board
- Paper

Of course, there are other supplies that can be handy to have in your home, but this is a basic list. You can find most of these supplies relatively inexpensively in your local discount store or even a dollar store.

Dollar stores are great places to get craft ideas as well as supplies for next to no money. The quality is the same although your choices might be limited.

Here's a little tip we love to pass on to you. Buy most of your craft supplies around the time when school supplies go on sale in late July and early August. This writer just went to the local Wal-Mart and stocked up on all sorts of supplies like construction paper for a dollar, crayons for ten cents, paper for a dollar, etc. The total bill for three bags full of these supplies was just \$15.43 (with tax!)

Have a central place to store your craft supplies. I like to buy the see through totes that can fit underneath a bed. If you organize your craft supplies, you can always just pull out the tote and begin a craft project whenever the mood strikes you – or your child.

So, are you ready to get started? Great! So are we!

Chapter 4 - Pilgrim and Indian Crafts

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Let's start out with how to transform your home or classroom into a Pilgrim mecca. If you really involve your child in these projects, think of how much fun it would be to have all of your dinner guests dressed in Pilgrim hats or Indian headbands!

If you and your child are enthusiastic about it, your guests will be too! Plus, think of the pictures you can get for scrap booking later!

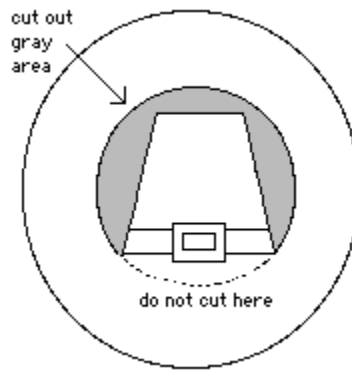
Here are some easy ways to make Pilgrim hats:

Pilgrim Hats for Boys

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This first Pilgrim hat for boys is so easy, all you need is a few supplies and a little know how. Start with a large piece of 10" x 13" black construction paper, a piece of 9" x 12" gray construction paper, some scissors, tape, and glue.

Here is a diagram that you will use to cut out the hat from the black construction paper:



1. Cut an oval out of the black construction paper the full size of the paper.
2. Cut a strip of paper to make a band to put around the boy's head, tape it. Put that circle (slightly oval) on the paper to trace the inner circle. Then draw a circle around it. Leave about a 2" brim on 3 sides and about 4" on the "front".
3. Draw the trapezoid, and cut out the gray parts. (see photo)
4. Cut out a band and band and buckle out of gray paper.
5. Glue the hat band on the hat and then the buckle on top of the band.
6. Bend the hat piece up and try on the child.
7. You may need to adjust the opening to fit the individual child's head.

On the underneath side, apply tape to the two points where the hat bends. This will help reinforce the stress point, and hopefully prevent tearing.

Here is a really easy Pilgrim hat you can make for boys out of simple supplies. All you need is a large piece of brown Kraft paper or two paper grocery sacks, masking tape, an old beach bucket (it should fit on your child's head!), tape, and an old belt.

1. Measure around the rim of the bucket with the belt and ask an adult to punch another hole and cut off the extra piece of belt.
2. Loop belt into a circle and buckle belt.
3. If using paper bags, open up the sides and cut off the bottoms. Tape them together.
4. Place paper centered over the upside-down beach bucket. Press paper down with hands around bucket to shape.
5. Place looped belt over top and push down to the bottom of the bucket near the rim securing the paper in place.
6. Remove hat from bucket.

If you want, you can use some spray starch and spray the bag with it while it is still on the bucket form to stiffen up the paper. This is what the finished product will look like:



Now, here is a super duper, amazingly, hard-to-believe, stupendously simple way to make a Pilgrim hat for boys. When we say it is easy, it is VERY easy! All you need is some tin foil, some black construction paper, and some tape!

First, take and cut out a circle from the paper. Cut a hole directly in the middle of the circle. Then take another piece of paper and fold it into a near conical shape. You don't want the hat to have a point, so be sure it is left open just a bit at the top. Tape the sides together and then tape the hat part to the brim (the circle).

Make a buckle out of the tin foil and glue it on the front. And you are done. Here is what it should look like:

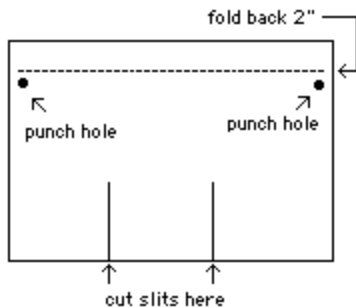


Pilgrim Hats for Girls

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Let's not leave out our fair-haired complements to the male psyche! The Pilgrim women and girls also had their own hats to wear. Here are a couple of ideas to help you make Pilgrim girl hats.

What you will need for this one is a 12" x 18" of white construction paper, glue, scissors, a hole punch, and some yarn. Here is a diagram to follow as you go through the instructions:



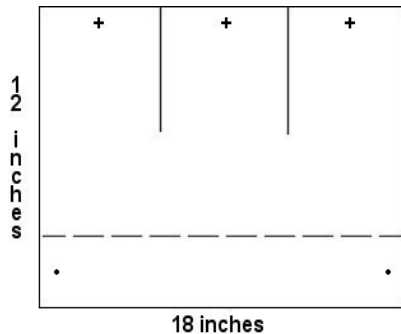
These are the steps you need to take to make your girl's Pilgrim hat:

1. Fold the paper lengthwise back two inches to create the front opening. Crease well.
2. Bend, without folding, the hat over the child's head so that the two shorter ends meet at each side of the child's jaw line.
3. Mark the paper with a pencil where it will meet at the child's jaw line, then cut a slit about six inches from the end of the paper towards the head. Cut another slit about six inches from the other end in towards the head.
4. Bending paper back in same position as if on child's head, fold the middle section down and hold.
5. Fold one side over the middle section and glue in place.
6. Fold the other side over the other two sections and glue in place.
7. Place the hat on a flat surface with the face opening up. Put something like a heavy book on it to hold in place.

8. Let dry.
9. On each end, hole punch one hole in the turned over flap.
10. Tie a piece of yarn to each hole.
11. The child then puts the hat on and ties the yarn to hold it on her head.

Here is another twist on how to make a Pilgrim hat for girls. It isn't much different than the other one, but the hats themselves are simple and easy to make in and of themselves. So, finding different patterns is a little difficult. Just try this one or the other one, and you will have cute Pilgrim hats for girls!

For this hat craft, you will just need a piece of white construction paper measuring 12" x 18", a stapler, and some white ribbon. A ruler wouldn't hurt either. Here's a diagram to help you as you follow the instructions:



1. Punch a hole one each end of the folded half of the paper as shown by the dots on the image.
2. Cut 2 pieces of ribbon, about 15 inches long, and tie one end of each ribbon to the hole you punched. The folded section will be the front/brim area of the hat and the ribbons can be tied under the chin or left hanging at the side of the head.
3. Notice the + on the 3 'flaps' created by the slits you cut in the other half of the paper? The 2 outside flaps are brought together under the middle flap - imagine lining up all the +'s in the image.

4. Staple these 3 together and this will form your finished bonnet!

Of course, there are also some easy ways to make Indian hats for your guests to wear as well! Indian headbands are probably the easiest crafts to make. Try a few of these ideas on for size.

Indian Headbands

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Take a plain brown paper bag and cut out a long strip that will fit around your child or your guest's head. Have your child decorate it with various "Indian" symbols and then glue on feathers to the back and staple together to make a headband.

You can make variations of this by using construction paper, by cutting out much more than just a strip of paper, or just by being creative with what you have! You may want to get really crazy and have "Dad" or the "Chief" of the family wear an elaborate headdress at dinner while carving the turkey!

All you really need for this is a big piece of construction paper, lots of feathers and glue, and some beads that you string on yarn and have fall down from the sides. Just let your imagination go wild and then you are all set!

Other Pilgrim and Indian Crafts

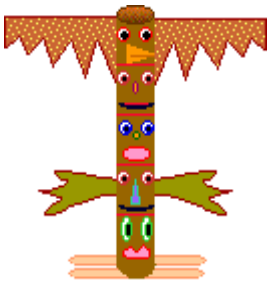
One of the best ways to utilize craft projects for decorating your home for Thanksgiving is to have a lot of different decorations lying about. That is why you will want to try and have your child craft all sorts of different things to decorate your home!

We'll get to the typical turkey and pumpkin crafts later, but here are some great ideas for Pilgrim and Indian crafts.

Totem Pole

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For this craft, just use some brown construction paper, an empty paper towel roll, markers, paints, or crayons, scissors, glue, and some craft sticks (popsicle sticks). Here is what your finished product will look like so you have a reference point:



Take these steps to make your totem poles:

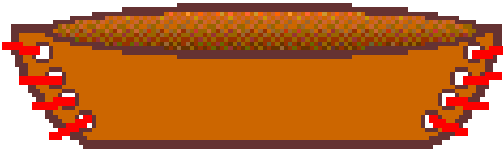
1. Wrap a piece of construction paper around the tube to see what size you will need. Trim the paper to the right height leaving about a half inch overlap that you will tape inside the tube at the top and the bottom.
2. Use a pencil and divide the paper into three or four horizontal sections
3. On each section, draw animal faces. Let your child be very creative in this step.
4. When the paper is decorated, wrap it around the tube and tape or glue the seams.
5. Draw wings or arms for some or all of the animals out of construction paper. Cut them out and then glue to the back of the “totem pole”.
6. To make your totem pole stand upright, glue several craft sticks together and glue to the base.

Have your child really think about family and symbolism and draw the faces on the totem pole to represent a family member. Then, during dinner, you can have them explain what each of the face means.

Paper Canoes

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This is a great Thanksgiving craft that can make a really cute table decoration when you put symbols of the holiday inside of it. It is really easy and only takes some brown construction paper, crayons, paint, or markers, scissors, yarn, and a hole punch.



1. Fold the construction paper in half length ways
2. About a half inch from the fold, make another fold
3. Do this on both sides of the original fold. The paper should look something like a capital “W”. The folds will be the bottom of the canoe.
4. Draw a canoe shape on the paper with the folds at the bottom of your canoe. All this really entails is making an arc shape from the top to the bottom.
5. Cut out the canoe shape and punch a few holes in each end.
6. With yarn, take and weave through the holes so that your canoe holds together.
7. Push the folded floor out flat so that the canoe sits upright.

You can put pine cones, real cranberries, or whatever you want inside the canoe. Then decorate your dinner table or anyplace in your home with these cute little boats!

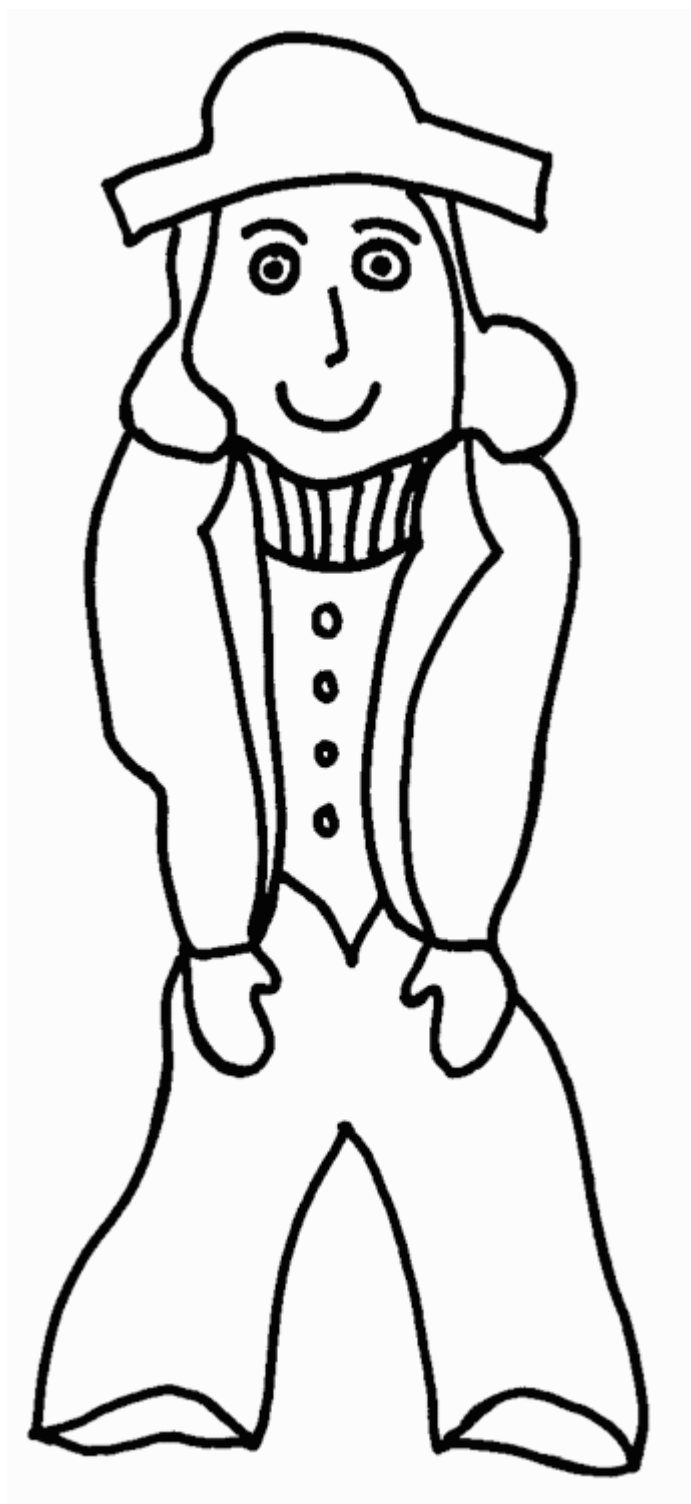
Pilgrim Dolls

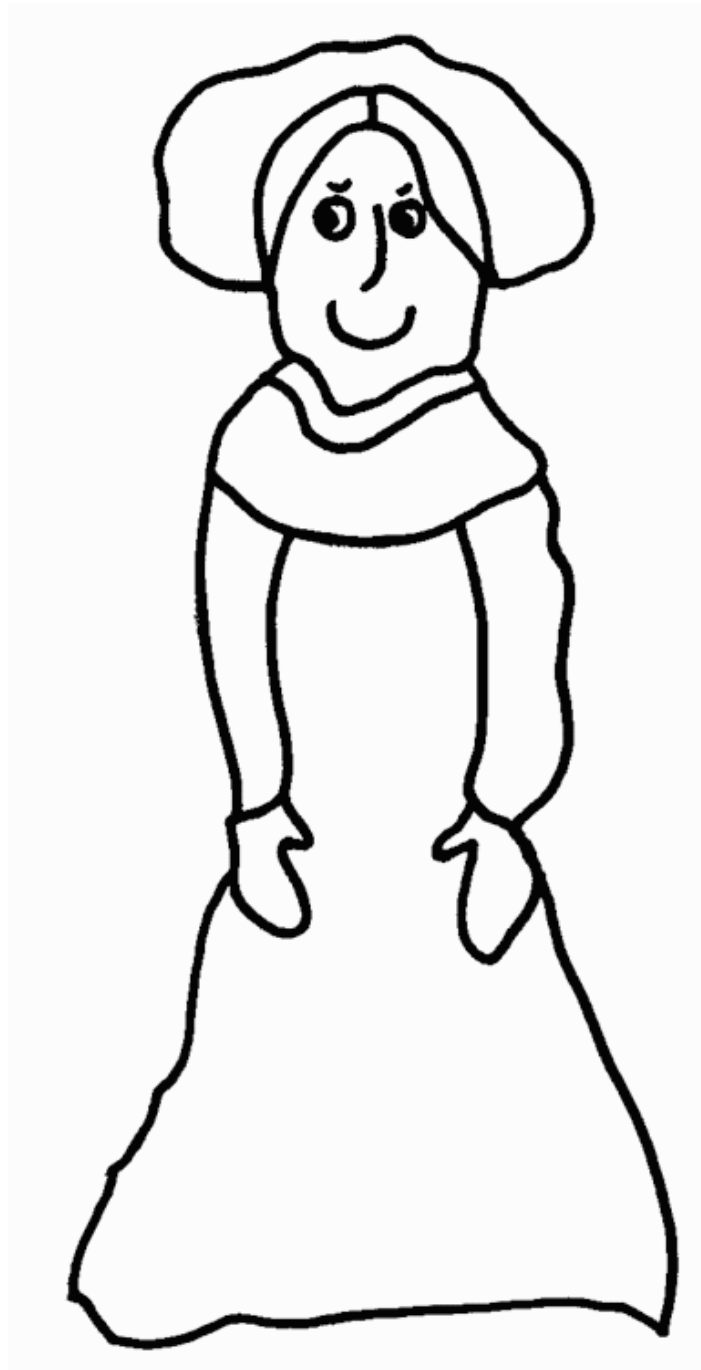
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Make these adorable little dolls out of just a few supplies. Here is what you will need to make some cute little dolls:

- Paper grocery bags (or a heavy fabric like canvas if you prefer)
- Markers, crayons, pencil crayons and pencils.
- Glue
- Scissors
- Stapler and staples
- If you are using fabric --- you could use fabric paints.
- Quilt batting or other material for stuffing --- could even be crumpled up newspaper.
- Pilgrim Cut-Out Templates

Here are the templates you will need to complete this craft:





Now, the easiest way to help children with this craft is to have the Pilgrim images already copied onto some brown construction paper. However, you can also utilize tracing paper so that your child can trace over the template and then have something to work with. Here are the steps that need to be taken to complete this craft:

1. Children can draw their pilgrims on the paper bag using pencil.
2. Make sure the paper bag is folded in half so that when the pilgrim design is cut-out, two will be cut-out instead of one.
3. Once the design is drawn out, artist can cut out their drawing.
4. Next, the two cut-out pilgrims can be decorated using markers, crayons etc.
5. Decorate only one side of each of the cut-outs ... one side will be the front with face etc. the other side will be the back with the back of the bonnet, coat etc.
6. Once the cut-outs are decorated, help your artist staple or glue all but one edge of the paper pilgrims together. Leave one area without glue or staples to insert the stuffing.
7. Stuff and glue or staple the final opening shut.

These are so cute when you make a few of them to decorate the Thanksgiving table. Have several Pilgrim men and women gracing your dinner service and you are sure to think about giving thanks instead of just “stuffing your face”!

Paper Plate Pilgrim

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This is truly one of the cutest Pilgrim crafts we've seen. It's easy for almost any age child and can be displayed with pride. All you need to do is gather the following supplies:

- A paper plate
- Red, yellow, and white paint
- Brown and white construction paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Crayons or markers
- Yarn for hair

As a reference point, here is what we are going for with this craft:



The first thing that you need to do is cut out pieces of construction paper for the face of your Pilgrim. Note the diagram above and then cut out ovals for the eyes, a “V” shape for the tie, a white mouth, and then the hat.

While they might make flesh colored paint, it is a much better learning experience for your child if you take the time to mix paint with them to paint the paper plate that will be the Pilgrim’s face.

Take a smidge of red paint and then add two to three times as much yellow paint. Start adding white paint as you are mixing until you achieve the desired flesh tone. Keep in mind that once the paint dries, it will be a little darker than what you see as wet paint, so make it just a smidge lighter than what you are striving for.

Once you have the right flesh colored plate, let it dry and set about cutting out the construction paper face and hat. Help your child if they need help, but it is alright if they do this less than perfect. In fact, it is much more adorable knowing that your child cut out all the pieces themselves – flaws and all!

After the painted paper plate is dry, glue the face pieces on. Glue on the yarn to simulate hair and then glue on the hat. Glue on his bow tie and you are all set to go!

Handprint Pilgrims and Indians

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These two crafts are extremely easy to do using your child's hand, some paper, and some paint. They can easily be made into fun placemats for the Thanksgiving dinner table.

To make a Native American face, paint the palm of the hand with a med brown paint (or any color you want) and paint each finger a different color. Press on the paper. Then use a paint brush and any color paint to add the head band just below the feathers.

To make Pilgrim paint the palm of the hand light brown and the middle three fingers black. Use a paint brush to add a black line of paint for the hat brim. After the paint is dry, have your child add the facial features.

Well, folks, it's time for the next section. You knew it was coming. But this could be the most fun craft section of this whole book! It is the turkey crafts section!

Chapter 5 - Turkey Crafts

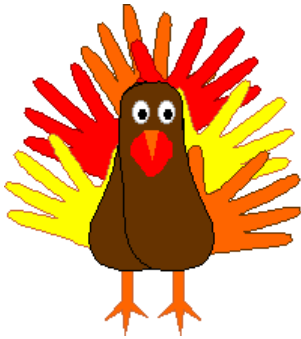
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Since the turkey is the most prominent symbol of Thanksgiving, it only follows that we will make turkey crafts to decorate our homes. They are all cute and easy and will make the home or classroom look really festive for Thanksgiving – all at the hands of a child!

Handprint Turkey

We are HUGE fans of using your child's limbs as decorations for any holiday. No, we're not talking about the actual limbs! Just tracing around them and then using the images to make some great creations! This hand print and foot print turkey is one of the easiest and cutest around!

Here is what it is supposed to look like:



For this craft, you will need construction paper in colors of brown, yellow, orange, and red, scissors, glue, and wiggly eyes or eyes cut out of construction paper (although the wiggly eyes look so much more fun!)

First, trace around your child's feet on the brown construction paper. Trace around both of them as these will be the turkey's body. Do not trace around the individual toes!

After that, trace around your child's hands on the red, yellow, and orange construction paper with their fingers slightly spread out. If your child is old enough to do this himself (or herself), by all means, let them! After all, crafting is a learning experience, so let them do as much as possible by themselves!

You should have two hand prints out of each color which will form the feathers of your turkey! Then you can assemble the turkey's body. The heels of the foot will make the turkey's head. Glue both pieces together slightly overlapping.

You will need a round wattle out of the red construction paper and a yellow beak. These are easy to do without a template. The wattle is slightly elongated. The beak is pointed almost in the shape of a triangle.

At this point, you can make the legs for your turkey. Cut two thin strips (not too thin!) of brown construction paper and then accordion fold them for the legs. The feet are made out of yellow construction paper and should have three points to simulate the feet.

Now, you are ready to assemble your turkey! Arrange the hand prints behind the foot prints and then glue into place. Glue on the facial features. Finally, add the legs and feet. Put wiggly eyes on your turkey so who knows where he (or she) is looking! Let dry and then hang wherever you want!

Don't forget to date the back of this great craft! You can make this a holiday tradition and make them each year. Marvel as you watch how much your child has grown over the years and be sure to display previous year's turkeys so your guests can see too!

Thankful Turkey

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We have other crafts that focus on being thankful at Thanksgiving, but this is a really cute turkey craft that will help your child realize that he or she has a lot to be thankful for at this wonderful time of year. It is an easy craft although, for smaller children, you may have to write down what they “dictate” to you, but that makes it all the cuter!

At Thanksgiving time, it doesn’t matter how young (or old) your child is, he or she should know that it is important to give thanks for all of the blessings that are given to them throughout the year. This is a great craft that will help remind them of all they have!

For this easy craft project, you need brown, red, orange, and yellow construction paper, glue, scissors, and some wiggly eyes (or eyes that you make out of the scraps of construction paper).

Let us note here that we especially love wiggly eyes for any craft project because it makes the final product look so much fun! They are cheap at discount stores and are bought in bags that contain many different sizes, so get these whenever you can.

To start this project, you should cut a round circle out of a piece of brown construction paper for the body of your turkey. The head is a smaller circle, and the neck is a rectangle both cut out of the brown construction paper. From the orange construction paper, cut out legs and feet – make them scrawny or robust – whichever you desire!

Glue the head the neck on the body. Make a small orange triangle for the beak, and a small “blob” for the turkey’s wattle. Glue into place. You can draw in eyes or glue on the wiggly eyes we talked about before!

Then, take the other colors of construction paper and cut out elongated ovals for the feathers. Make five or six of these – at least. On each feather, have your child write what they are thankful for at this Thanksgiving.

For younger children, let them scribble on the feathers and then have them tell you what they were trying to express. You can then write on the feathers what they tell you they are thankful for. Think of how cute that will look to everyone who visits you on Thanksgiving!

Glue the feathers on the back of the body of the turkey and you have a cute keepsake craft made by your child that you can bring out year after year. Do not forget to date the back of the craft so that you know exactly when your child made it and how old he or she is!

Stained Glass Turkeys

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This craft is very similar to the craft above, but it is especially beautiful when you are able to hang it in a window so that the sun shines through it creating a beautiful stained glass look!

For this craft, we suggest using a paper plate, various “fall” colors of construction paper, markers, crayons, or paint, glue, scissors, and yarn. You see, what the key is to making memorable Thanksgiving crafts is having you and/or your child make the craft unique.

That is why you can experiment around with what works for you. There is no “rule” set in stone that says it should be done one way or another. We are just trying to provide you with a guide!

So, start by gathering together these supplies:

- Brown, black, yellow, orange, and red construction paper
- Glue or glue stick
- Scissors
- Colored tissue paper or cellophane
- Paper plate
- Brown poster paint
- Hole punch
- String or yarn

Start by using the brown paint to paint the paper plate. Let dry. While you are waiting for the paper plate to dry, you will want to draw several elongated ovals on the various colors of construction paper. Cut them out on the outside. After that leave it for about an inch border then cut out the inside of the feathers.

Take the glue or glue stick (note, the stick works best) and place a thin line of glue around the outside of the feather. Place a piece of cellophane or tissue paper on top of the feather. Press to help dry. Once it is dry, trim around the edges.

By now, the paper plate should be dry. Either takes some construction paper to make eyes, feet, a beak, a wattle, and even some hands. Once you have these, glue them on where they should be.

Then, take the stained glass feathers and glue onto the back of the paper plate. Let everything dry completely. Then, take and punch a hole in the top of the turkey and put some string through. Hang in a window and enjoy the beauty of you and your child's stained glass turkey.

Pine Cone Turkey #1

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This time of year has pine cone shedding going on all over the place. There are many ways that you can make pine cones a cute turkey craft. So go outside, find your cones, and then try this craft! This one makes a great table decoration.

Here are the supplies you'll need:

- A pine cone
- An acorn or a nut in the shell
- Brown, red, orange and yellow construction paper
- Pencil or marker
- Scissors
- Glue
- Hot glue
- Googly eyes
- Clay

Start by cutting out feathers from the different colors of construction paper. These are really elongated ovals. Use your creativity to make these feathers look as real as possible and you will be rewarded in the end!

Put a small blob of clay on one side of the pine cone to steady it on the table. The pine cone will be the turkey's body. Glue the "feathers" to the top of the wide side of the pine cone.

Glue the acorn to the front of the turkey using hot glue. Glue on two googly eyes and a small piece of red construction paper (for the turkey's wattle). Let the glue set.

You now have a great Thanksgiving table turkey decoration. To avoid staining a tablecloth with the clay, put the turkey on a small plate.

Pine Cone Turkey #2

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Here is another cute turkey craft that you make out of a pine cone, some construction paper, feathers, and a couple of Smarties candies! Oh, we forgot about the glue and the scissors, but that's a given by now, isn't it?

This craft works best with the long and slender pine cones, but you can still make them with the "fat" ones as well. Begin by getting together your turkey's facial features. Out from a construction paper, cut out flat feet, a beak, and a red wattle. You will need two Smarties candies for the eyes.

Then, take the feathers and glue them into the spaces of the pine cone at the back. Put a bead of glue into the natural spaces of the pine cone and glue in feathers. It doesn't matter what color the feathers are. It looks beautiful either way!

While you are waiting for the glue to dry, you can set about putting on your turkey's face. Glue on the "Smartie" eyes, the beak, the wattle, and the feet. Wait for everything to dry and you have a cute little decoration for Thanksgiving that will make your table look not only festive but homey as well!

Pine Cone Turkey #3

Not only is this a great Thanksgiving craft, but it is also a great way to put place cards at your dinner table and give your guests something to take home with them as a memento.

Besides the pinecones, some different colored pipe cleaners are pretty much all kids need to craft the time away while the turkey cooks.

Here's what you will need to make this next turkey pine cone craft:

- Plump pine cones (spherical shaped about one to one and a half inches diameter)
- One red bumpy pipe cleaner (chenille stem)
- One orange bumpy pipe cleaner
- Five other colors of bumpy pipe cleaners
- Glue (craft, wood, or all-purpose that dries clear)
- Wire Cutter

Make sure each pine cone has dried thoroughly.

Cut the bumps apart in each chenille wire. Using wire cutters, cut in the center of each place where the wire narrows down—you want the bumps whole and fluffy.

Take one red bump and shape into an 'S'. Glue this to the rounded end of the cone with the bump protruding somewhat above the cone for the head of the turkey.

Take one orange bump and shape into a 'V'. Glue this under the bottom of the round part of the cone for the legs and feet. The feet can be shaped later. Toes can even be added.

Take five to seven other bumps and carefully bend them so the narrow ends can be twisted together leaving the puffy end somewhat rounded. Glue as many of these as nicely and make sure it fits close to the flatter stemmed end of the pinecone remembering to use glue only on the twisted end of the chenille wire.

Let dry and then adjust shaped of chenille wires to make your turkey look more realistic.

You can also use these as a nice napkin ring by cutting the orange chenille wires longer and make them into a circle and glue circle on bottom of turkeys.

Pine Cone Turkey #4

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This is one of those projects for you adults out there. You can certainly involve your children in making this turkey, but it is definitely geared toward the “older” crowd as opposed to the “rug rat” crowd!

Here are the supplies you will need to get along with a picture for you to follow:



What you'll need:

- Pinecone
- Acorn or elongated small nut
- Two (10 mm) wiggle eyes
- Low temp glue gun or tacky glue
- Red chenille stem
- Orange chenille stem
- Wire cutters
- Bird feathers
- Slice of dead tree branch or other piece of wood for base (about 1/2 inch thick and three inches across)
- Gold spray paint

Lightly spray the pinecone with gold spray paint. Let dry.

Cut the orange chenille into two (three inch) pieces. Fold the first orange chenille stem into half, twist about 1/4 inches from end and open up ends to make the feet. Repeat for second orange chenille stem.

Stick the orange feet in the turkey a little less than halfway from the largest end. Glue in place.

Glue turkey body (pinecone) with feet down to the piece of wood. Glue the acorn to the smallest end of the pine cone. Glue feathers in the pinecone closest to the largest end (see photo for placement). Glue wiggle eyes on the head (acorn).

Cut a tiny piece of red chenille stem to use as the waddle and glue below the eyes.

Make extras and use them on your Thanksgiving table!

Stuffed Turkey

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You can craft a paper bag turkey as a center piece for your dinner table from a few handy supplies. All you need is a brown paper bag of any size, scissors, newspaper, glue, a red balloon, some wiggly eyes, two large grocery bags, and a large rubber band.

To make the head, stuff the bottom of the medium-sized bag with balled-up newspaper. Twist the top of the bag to form a long, skinny neck. Glue the wiggly eyes and the balloon wattle onto the face.

For the turkey's body, use one large bag. Snip a hole through the front of the bag an inch from the bottom and fit the neck into it. Then, stuff the body two thirds full with newspaper.

Close the top of the bag with the rubber band. To make tail feathers, cut four large half-circles from the remaining bag and then glue them in layers to the back of the body.

Here's what he should look like:



Turkey Table Topper

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This craft is a little more advanced, but you can still enlist the help of your child or children in creating it. Not only does it look cute, it can do double duty by holding dinner rolls! Here's what it will look like as a point of reference:



Supplies needed include:

- Large brown paper bag
- A piece of corrugated cardboard
- Paper plates
- Stapler
- Mod-Podge glue
- Colored paper (construction paper)
- Orange or red balloon
- Wiggly eyes
- Glitter, stickers, or other notions
- Craft clothespins
- Tacky glue

To construct your turkey, follow these directions:

1. For the turkey's body, trim the bag so that it measures about 8 inches tall. Then fold down the sides so that they are half the height and double the thickness. Cut the cardboard to fit in the bottom of the bag and insert it.
2. Next, fold a paper plate in half and fit it inside the bag where the tail will go, bending the sides as needed. Staple the plate in place.
3. Then staple a second plate (don't fold this one) to the outside of the bag behind the first plate.
4. For wings, fold 2 paper plates in half and staple one to each side so the bag is sandwiched between it.
5. For the turkey's head, fold and staple another paper plate like this:



Attach to the body. Your turkey will start looking like this read to decorate:



6. Decorate all the paper plates, including the head, by gluing on torn bits of colored paper. Then add a balloon wattle and wiggly eyes.
7. For the feathers, have your kids glue colored paper shapes on paper plates, layering different prints or creating bold patterns if they like.
8. When the glue is dry, cut feather shapes out of the plates and stick a craft clothespin to the back of each with tacky glue so your child can attach the feathers to the paper plates.

9. For an extra fancy finish, they can add decorative notions or even their names.

Alright, let's look at some other Thanksgiving crafts that you can make either on your own or with your child!

Chapter 6 - More Thanksgiving Crafts

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Thanksgiving – as we have mentioned many times before – is a holiday where we are supposed to give thanks for all of the blessings in our lives. We gather with family, we eat a lot, and we enjoy each other's company. Being thankful is tantamount to the Thanksgiving holiday, so here are a few ideas to help you remember everything you have to be thankful for.

Thankful Wreath



This is a great craft specifically directed towards children, but can be made by adults as well. All you need for this craft is a paper plate, some scissors, glue, and various colors of construction paper.

It can help tremendously if you have a pre-made template for leaves to cut out. A good way to do this is to download some Thanksgiving coloring pages that have leaves on them. Then transfer those images to the paper for you or your child to cut out.

You start this craft by taking the paper plate and cutting out a half circle in the middle of the plate. Just underneath the horizontal line of the half circle write “I Am Thankful For”. Then set about cutting out your leaves.

On each leaf, write something you or your child are thankful for. As we have said before, if you have children who aren't ready to write just yet, have them dictate what they are thankful for and then write it for them.

Once all the leaves are filled out just glue them all around the outside of the paper plate, and you have a great "Thankful" Thanksgiving craft to show anyone who comes by your house around the holiday!

Thankful Centerpiece

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We all need a centerpiece for our Thanksgiving table, so why not let everyone participate in making one? This easy and simple craft is fun to do and you can enlist the help of your child or children to help dinner guests participate.

This craft is much like the one we gave you above. You need some leaf cutouts to begin with. Let your child cut them all out all by themselves. Then, glue or staple them to craft sticks.

Get a basket or a bowl and put some florist's foam inside it. As your guests arrive, have them write on the leaf something they are thankful for. Then, you can stick each leaf into the centerpiece.

During dinner – or during dessert – have each family member and/or guest read one of the leaves and then return it to the bowl or basket. Be sure to have a few leaves already present in the bowl (or basket) that you (or your child) have already filled out. It can be fun to see if people can guess who wrote the blessing that someone read.

Thankful Tree

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Here is another great craft project for Thanksgiving that can be used as a centerpiece on the big day. It will take a little time to prepare meaning that you should probably start this at the beginning of November. The craft itself is actually quite easy!

Go outside and find a small twig with a few branches still on it. In an empty, clean soup can, pour in plaster of Paris and stick the twig into the center. Let dry.

Cut several different leaf shapes out of construction paper. Punch a hole in the top of each one and pull a string through the hole. Every morning, have the child write something they are thankful for and then hang the leaf from the tree.

If your child is too young to write him or herself, let them scribble or at least attempt to write what they are thinking and then dictate to you what they were trying to convey. Then, you can write for them.

As we said, if you start this out at the beginning of November, by Thanksgiving Day, you'll have a great table center piece for your Thanksgiving table

Thanksgiving Card #1

A great project for arts and crafts for children to make is a Thanksgiving card. When we can't be with the people we love at Thanksgiving, it's a nice idea to let them know you'll be thinking of them at this special time of year.

To make Thanksgiving cards, all you need is a piece of construction paper folded in half. Have the child trace his or her hand on the front of the card.

Let them color the thumb brown which is the turkey's head. This is a side view, by the way. The fingers are the turkey feathers and they should be multi-colored. Have them draw on an eye and a red wattle. On the inside of the card, have this poem pre-printed and let them paste it in:

This isn't just a Turkey
As anyone can see,
I made it with my hand
Which is part of me.
It comes with lots of love
Especially to say,
I hope that you have a very
HAPPY THANKSGIVING DAY!!

Then you can send out these cards to loved ones who you can't be with on the Thanksgiving holiday. We're sure they'll be glad to receive something so special, unique and creative in the mail to know that you are thinking of them at Thanksgiving time.

Thanksgiving Card #2

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We also like this idea for a Thanksgiving card because it can be done by even very young children as long as they can hold a pencil or a crayon. People have been doing rubbings of things for a very long time. In the fall, it is a great time to do some of leaves to include on your Thanksgiving card.

Go outside and pick green leaves off a tree. If you can, find a leaf that isn't brown yet because it will fall apart when you go to do your rubbing.

For the card itself, you can use construction paper or poster board. Make it a size that will fit into an envelope that you will be able to easily find. Most office supply stores and even discount stores have envelopes that will fit standard size card meaning an 8 1/2" x 11" piece of paper folded in half.

But you will want the card to be sturdy as well, so we don't recommend using just regular paper. Just take a regular piece of construction paper or poster board and fold in half. Wal-Mart also sells paper that is card stock, so you may want to consider this type of paper as well!

Once you have your leaves ready, you can do two things with them. First, you can do a simple leaf rubbing. Take a regular piece of white paper and fold it in half. Place the leaf inside the fold vein side up.

Then have your child color over the top with a colored pencil or a crayon until the leaf shows through. After you have a nice design, cut it out in an oval, a circle, or a square and glue to the front of the card.

You can also use paint to make leaf prints on the front of the card. First, cover your work area with newspaper to prevent damage. Then take some poster paint and cover the veined side of the leaf with paint. You can get creative with this and use different colors in different areas of the leaf.

Once the leaf is covered, gently and carefully lift the leaf up and place the paint side down on the front of your paper. Press down to be sure the image sticks and then lift straight up from the paper. Let dry and decorate the card as you want.

Here is what a couple of these cute painted leaf Thanksgiving cards should look like:



Turkey Pumpkin

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This is a cute way to use leftover pumpkins from Halloween and make them into a cute Thanksgiving craft that you can put on your coffee table or use as a dinner table centerpiece.

Take a small pumpkin and poke some holes in the back part of it near the top. Then stick a bunch of lollipops into the holes to make turkey feathers. You can then use a black marker to draw on a turkey face or use construction paper to make the face. Just be creative with this craft and turn that pumpkin into a turkey with a little imagination.

Another Turkey Pumpkin

For this craft, you will need to have someone who is good working with wood and is able to operate a simple jigsaw. Take some thicker wood and draw an elongated oval shape onto it for turkey feathers. If you want to get really, really creative and make your feathers much more detailed, feel free! Just be sure you can cut them out!

Once the feathers are cut out – you’ll want about six of these – paint them in different colors and let dry. Once the feathers are dry, drill a small hole in the bottom of each one. Insert 2” pegs into the hole. These pegs need to be strong, so get thicker ones.

You will also need a turkey's face. You can find templates online, or use your creativity to draw one that will stick out from the front of the pumpkin. Cut out of wood, paint, and drill a hole in the back of it inserting pegs just as with the feathers. You can, however, just draw on a turkey face, if you like.

To assemble your pumpkin, just stick the feathers into the back of the pumpkin and the turkey head into the front. Voila! You now have a really cute front porch decoration or something to display in your home!

The Thanksgiving Story

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As we have said earlier in the book, it's important to tell your child the story of Thanksgiving – whether it is the true one or the one that we have been taught for years. Discussing the Thanksgiving story with them will conjure up their own ideas.

This is a perfect time for your child to get creative! Have them write their own story of the first Thanksgiving from both a Pilgrim and Indian point of view that they can read during dinner time.

Stress to them that they should use details and touch on each of the five senses to make their story come to life. What did the Pilgrims hear? What did they see? How did they feel? Tell them to use adjectives also that will color up the story.

They can also write a Thanksgiving play about the first Thanksgiving. This is a great way to involve everyone at the gathering. Give everyone a part and let them recite their lines as you go through the play.

We love writing projects to help inspire creativity, and this is a terrific one that lets the child work on writing skills, but also thinking skills as well. It doesn't

have to be a work of art, it just needs to come from your child's head and be sincere.

The Thanksgiving story or play is likely to become the center of attention and could turn into a tradition for years to come!

Thanksgiving Placemats and Place Cards

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For your Thanksgiving dinner table, a cute way to get your children involved in decorating the table is to let them make placemats and place cards showing where everyone should sit. These can be made in many different ways including using many of the crafts that we mentioned above.

For example, when we made the Indian and Pilgrim hand prints, turn those into placemats by putting the handprints on paper. Then let your child decorate as they like with crayons, markers, stickers, or whatever they want.

If you are fortunate enough to own a home laminating machine, that makes making placemats easier and food friendly! They can be purchased quite inexpensively at local discount stores, and if you are a big crafter, it can be very useful and pay for itself in no time!

You can also go online and print out coloring pages for your child to color and make into a placemat. You can find tons of web sites that have Thanksgiving coloring pages available for download.

With place cards, all you need is some construction paper or poster board and some creativity. Cut the paper into 5" x 7" pieces and then fold in half. Have you or your child – depending on their ability – write down the name of a guest. Then, around the name, have them decorate the place card with turkey stamps, stickers, or just fun designs.

Conclusion

Yes, it's true that Thanksgiving is a special time of the year. As with any other holiday, it can be a great time to start making crafts with your child so you can decorate your home for the holiday and make it look festive at the same time.

The lessons you can teach them are endless plus, it's a good time for conversation to start as you put together the various crafts. You can show them how you can be creative. Children learn by watching. As they mimic the way you do things, you can show them valuable skills.

Even though the real first Thanksgiving wasn't really what we have always been taught, it is still a time for us to gather together with family and give special thanks for all of our blessings no matter how small or how big.

Especially with the thankful crafts given above, we should always take time to think about what we have and be thankful. As we said, the Native American culture is used to doing this all the time – not just at a specific time of the year.

Maybe we should take a hint from them and give special thanks when something wonderful happens to us or even when we are doing something small. Like at the dinner table – we say “Grace” to thank God for the food. That's a Thanksgiving dinner in itself.

What makes the holiday a true holiday is the gathering of family and friends and the mass thanks that we give together. It is a blessing to have many people whom you love get together at one time of the year to collectively realize that what Thanksgiving is really about is what is before them at that very moment.

Sitting down to dinner, holding hands, saying a prayer, and then digging into a great feast! So next Thanksgiving, remembers that, and takes the time to create

some fun Thanksgiving crafts. It will become a tradition you and your child – as well as your family – can enjoy for years and years!